

## THE SCHEDULE

The youngest sister comes in clutching Baby like the last piece of firewood. Bill is left with the toys and the playpen where late in the afternoon Baby will stand and shake the bars like Mickey Rooney on Death Row.

The rest of us wait in the driveway and talk about the Rose Bowl game. We lean on the cars. We have another drink. Bill comes out of the house and says he is afraid his penis is too short.

We look at one another; we look at Ray, the veteran. "Stick to the schedule," he says calmly. "We haven't even had a fight yet and the fights come after the Cotton Bowl. Remember, first the Rose Bowl, then aimlessness in the driveway, then a little too much to drink and insults to the wives and kids, then the apologies, the Cotton Bowl, the fights, then fears of the penis, the Orange Bowl, the tears and running from the room, and finally the insurmountable longing."

Everyone drinks. The bottle goes from hand to hand like a sandbag. Somebody kicks a tire. Somebody takes Ohio State. Somebody says, "You guys hear about the CIA hit list? If you're on it, you're as good as dead."

"I wish I was on it," says Bill.

Ray begins to get angry. "Now, listen. We can work in the death wish if we have to, but you know goddamn good and well it doesn't belong here.

"You're new at this and I know it's not easy, but if we're going to get through it we have to stick to the schedule. Now I'm going to open the hood on this piece of junk you call a low mileage special and the next thing I want to hear out of you is a number, get it?"

Bill nods. He listens. He says, "Sixteen." He looks at his watch. "Hey, almost time for the kick off."

"That's it," Ray says putting an arm over the kid's shoulder. "That's the idea. Everything in its place and a place for everything, like that ugly kid of yours who should probably be in a zoo."